



# NARDIN ACADEMY

## RETURN TO SCHOOL PLAN

### 2021-22

September 3, 2021



## Office of the President

August 27, 2021

Dear Nardin Community,

True to our commitment of offering an enriching and engaging school experience for every student, Nardin Academy looks forward to a successful and safe 2021-22 academic year. Our goal remains fostering a safe and welcoming environment for all students, faculty, staff, and families. Nardin will continue to provide in-person, five day a week learning across the Montessori, Lower, Middle, and High Schools and prioritizes providing the full Nardin experience, including extracurricular activities, athletics, the arts, and service opportunities.

Throughout the summer and in recent days, the Leadership Team reviewed local, state, and national guidelines related to the pandemic. On Monday, the Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH) released [its guidance](#) for the safe reopening of schools. In accordance with County mandates and recommendations of the New York State Education Department (NYSED), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the Nardin Return to School Plan is a summary of the policies, protocols, and procedures related to COVID that Nardin will follow for the upcoming academic year.

As we enter the third academic year impacted by this global pandemic, we have the benefit of knowledge and experience to make informed decisions. As the year progresses, Nardin will continue to update this plan in response to new data and changing COVID transmission rates at school and in the Western New York community. All updates and communication will be posted at [nardin.org/covid-19](https://nardin.org/covid-19). By following protocols and coming together as one Nardin Academy, I am confident we will have a safe, positive, and exceptional year.

Be well,

Sandra E. Betters  
President

September 3, 2021

# 1. Masking

In accordance with guidance issued by ECDOH dated August 2021, all Nardin students, faculty, staff, and visitors are required to wear masks in school buildings. Nardin supports the assertion of the local Health Department that when students, faculty, and staff correctly wear masks, they protect others as well as themselves. Consistent and correct mask use is especially important indoors and in crowded settings when physical distancing cannot be maintained.

The Montessori Toddler class, age 18 months to two years, is exempt from masking, as per health officials.

## A. Indoors

Nardin requires indoor masking for all individuals age 2 years and older, including students, faculty, staff, and all visitors, **regardless of vaccination status**. Appropriate masks must be worn at all times in all classroom and non-classroom settings, including but not limited to hallways, school offices, restrooms, gyms, locker areas, community spaces. Students may remove their masks during meals as long as they sit 3 feet apart, to the extent possible, and a seating chart will be kept. Acceptable masks must be two layers of materials and may be cloth-based or surgical masks that cover both the mouth and nose. Bandanas, gaiters, and clear face shields are not considered acceptable face coverings.

## B. Outdoors

In accordance with the County recommendations, masks should be worn outdoors when students are in close proximity, especially those individuals who are unvaccinated. At all times, physical distancing protocols and procedures will be maintained for students, faculty, and staff to protect against COVID-19 on school grounds, especially when masks are not being worn outside. Mindful mask breaks are necessary, and regular breaks will be built into outdoor time.

## C. Bus Transportation

Students are required to wear masks on buses. The ECDOH requires students, staff, bus drivers, and bus aides to wear a mask at all times while on school buses, including on buses operated by public and private school systems and private vendors, regardless of vaccination status.

## D. Mask Breaks

Nardin will provide ample mask breaks for students throughout the day.

## 2. Physical Distancing & Close Contact

As an essential part of Nardin's effort to maintain a safe and healthy environment, the Academy will continue to practice physical distancing in all school spaces such as classrooms, hallways, the dining hall, and community spaces.

### A. Students

As is strongly recommended by the ECDOH, Nardin will maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms combined with mask wearing, to reduce transmission risk, regardless of vaccination status.

When determining close contact status following an exposure, unvaccinated students within 3 feet from the positive COVID-19 case for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period during a time the case was infectious will be quarantined regardless of whether masks were worn. As per CDC guidelines, fully vaccinated individuals who are identified as close contacts are not subject to quarantine.

### B. Faculty and Staff

The ECDOH strongly recommends schools maintain at least 6 feet of physical distance between faculty and staff and students combined with mask wearing, to reduce transmission risk, regardless of vaccination status. We recognize that distance may be harder to maintain when active learning and student engagement is taking place in the classroom. Nardin support vigilant masking during these circumstances.

When determining close contact status following an exposure, unvaccinated faculty and staff within 6 feet from the positive COVID-19 case for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period during a time the case was infectious will be quarantined regardless of whether masks were worn. As per CDC guidelines, fully vaccinated individuals who are identified as close contacts are not subject to quarantine.

### C. Band, Chorus, Orchestra, and Music Classes

Practice, Lessons, and Classes: As per County guidelines, Nardin requires that individuals participating in activities which involve projecting the voice (e.g., singing) or playing a wind instrument must be 6 feet apart during practice, lessons, and music classes and must wear a mask when not singing or playing.

Performances: As per County guidelines, Nardin requires, to the extent practicable, that individuals participating in activities that involve projecting the voice (e.g., singing) or playing a wind instrument must be 6 feet apart during all performances and must wear a mask when not singing or playing. During performances, Nardin will maintain least 6 feet of distance between the performers and the audience during all performances. Please note, attendance may be limited in adherence to these guidelines.

#### D. P.E., Dance and Other Physical Activity

Individuals participating in activities that involve physical activity and exertion will maintain physical distancing of 6 feet.

#### E. Busing and Transportation

Transportation provided by public school districts is at the discretion of individual districts. When Nardin provides busing, we will adhere to the guidelines of the County, including:

- maintaining a daily seating and attendance chart for the identification of close contacts
- keeping students from the same household in the same seats
- students from different households should not share seats
- loading buses back to front

### **3. Health Monitoring**

#### A. School Entry Screening

As per ECDOH requirements, Nardin will conduct daily health screenings, including temperature and COVID-19 symptom checks, upon entry into school for all students, faculty, staff, and visitors to identify individuals who may have COVID-19. If an individual presents with a temperature greater than 100.0°F, or reports one or more COVID-19 symptoms, regardless of vaccination status, the individual will not be permitted into school buildings or sent directly to a dedicated isolation area prior to being picked up or otherwise sent home.

COVID-19 symptoms include the following: fever, chills, rigors, muscle aches, headache, back pain, fatigue, runny nose, congestion, sore throat, loss of smell, loss of taste, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, wheezing, chest pain, cough, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, dehydration, altered mental status/confusion, and seizures.

#### B. Questionnaire Screening: Ruvna

Nardin requires the use of its daily questionnaire, Ruvna, for students, faculty, staff, and visitors reporting to school. Individuals listed at the primary contacts for each student will receive a digital text and email each day at 6 am with health screening questions. These questions must be answered for each student, faculty, and staff member before the school day begins.

High School students may complete the screening themselves. New families are automatically registered into the Ruvna system. To provide authorization for new High School students to screen themselves, please complete [this online form](#).

### C. Developing Illness at School

The ECDOH requires that if a student, faculty, or staff member develops COVID-19 symptoms while at Nardin, regardless of vaccination status, the ill person must immediately be placed in an isolation area or room at school and picked up within 60 minutes by a parent or guardian if a student or sent home if a staff member.

### D. Isolation Areas and Rooms

The ECDOH requires Nardin continues to maintain isolation areas and rooms separate from others for students, faculty, or staff who are exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms. These designated rooms will be monitored, overseen, and logged.

## 4. **Returning to School Following Illness**

### A. COVID-19-Like Illness

The ECDOH requires that for students, faculty, or staff to return to school following a COVID-19-like illness, regardless of vaccination status, one of the three following criteria must be met:

1. A negative COVID-19 test is provided. The ECDOH strongly recommends a PCR COVID-19 test
2. A note from the student, faculty, or staff's medical care provider with an alternative diagnosis is provided
3. There have been at least 10 days since the onset of COVID-19 symptoms

Please note, the ECDOH offers free COVID-19 PCR testing to symptomatic Erie County residents and close contacts of confirmed cases. Other local testing sites are listed at [www.erie.gov/covidtestsites](http://www.erie.gov/covidtestsites). COVID-19 diagnostic testing is fully covered by all health insurance plans per federal mandates. A negative at-home COVID-19 test result will NOT be accepted to return a student, faculty, or staff member to Nardin.

### B. COVID-19 Positive Case

The ECDOH requires that students, faculty, and staff must meet all the following criteria in order to return to school following testing positive for COVID-19:

1. At least 10 days after COVID-19 symptom onset or 10 days from their first positive test if asymptomatic and
2. Fever-free for at least 24 consecutive hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and
3. COVID-19 symptoms are improving

## 5. When Nardin Receives Notice of a COVID-19 Positive Case

Nardin will adhere to the County guidelines related to positive cases of COVID-19 reported on campus.

- The County requires Nardin to notify the ECDOH COVID-19 School Team of all positive COVID-19 cases reported by staff, students, or families. The school is required to prepare a list of classroom, bus, sports, and extracurricular activities close contacts.
- **Close contacts are defined as students who are within 3 feet or faculty and staff who are within 6 feet from the positive COVID-19 case for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period during a time the case was infectious, regardless of whether masks were worn.**

## 6. Quarantine

The County uses the close contact definition along with the duration of exposure, proximity, and presence of symptoms to determine who is an exposed contact and therefore subject to quarantine. Nardin will cooperate with contact tracers to determine close contacts and compile contact information. Parents, guardians, faculty, and staff will be notified as soon as possible if they are considered to be contacts exposed to a COVID-19 case.

Persons are considered fully vaccinated for COVID-19  $\geq 2$  weeks after they have received the second dose in a 2-dose series (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna), or  $\geq 2$  weeks after they have received a single-dose vaccine (Johnson & Johnson [J&J]/Janssen).

Nardin will provide **remote learning** to students in quarantine due to a positive diagnosis or an identification as a close contact. The other exception that merits access to remote learning is a medical necessity documented by a health provider that requires an absence from in-person learning for more than five days. In all cases of absence, assignments are accessible on Schoology, and teachers may be reached by email.

Please note, remote learning will not be offered in instances of travel.

### A. Fully Vaccinated Close Contacts

As stated in the County guidelines and per the CDC, fully vaccinated individuals who are identified as close contacts are not subject to quarantine. However, these individuals should monitor for COVID-19 symptoms. Fully vaccinated persons who have a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should get tested 3-5 days after exposure and should wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result. If they begin to experience COVID-19 symptoms, they must follow the "Returning to School Following Illness" protocol detailed above in Section 4.

## B. Unvaccinated Close Contacts

As stated in the County guidelines and per the CDC, unvaccinated students within 3 feet or unvaccinated faculty and staff within 6 feet from the positive COVID-19 case for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24- hour period during a time the case was infectious, regardless of if masks were worn, will be considered a close contact and quarantined for 10 days from the last day of exposure to the positive COVID-19 case.

Persons who are not fully vaccinated should be tested immediately after being identified, and, if negative, tested again in 5-7 days after last exposure or immediately if COVID-19 symptoms develop during quarantine.

Nardin will maintain and update seating charts for classrooms, buses, the dining hall, and extracurricular activities for use in the event there is a reported positive case of COVID-19. **If a positive case arises and a seating chart is not available, all unvaccinated individuals in the class will be considered unvaccinated close contacts and be quarantined for 10 days from the last day of exposure to the positive COVID-19 case.**

Whether or not a seating chart is maintained, if there are two or more cases in a classroom during a 10-day period, all unvaccinated individuals in the class will quarantine for 10 days from their last exposure to the positive COVID-19 case, regardless of whether masks were worn.

## 7. Youth Sports

Nardin is committed to providing students with robust athletic opportunities outside of the classroom while remaining mindful and considerate of the health and safety of our competitors and opposing teams.

In accordance with the County, the following guidelines apply to COVID-19 moderate and high-risk youth sports. Definitions for COVID-19 moderate and high-risk youth sports can be found at the [NY Forward website](#).

The ECDOH requires schools to notify the ECDOH COVID-19 School Team of all youth sport positive COVID-19 cases reported by coaches, staff, students, parents, or guardians.

The ECDOH requires masking for all youth sport players during all youth sport activities whenever the players are not actively participating in game play or practice. The ECDOH further requires masking of all youth sport coaches and staff during all youth sport activities while not directly engaged in physical activity.

The ECDOH strongly recommends masking for all youth sport players during game play and practice unless they are unable to physically tolerate masking. In addition, ECDOH strongly recommends that athletes and coaches who are not engaging in physical activity (i.e., sitting on the bench or sidelines) maintain a distance of at least 3 feet.

If there is one COVID-19 case on a team that is present while infectious, all unvaccinated players,



coaches, and staff are required to pause for 10 days from the last exposure. Vaccinated players, coaches, and staff may continue game play and team activities during a team pause, unless individuals exhibit COVID-19 symptoms.

Pause is defined as no practice, games, or team activities for the affected team, but players, coaches, and staff not identified as unvaccinated close contacts are able to go to work and school. If there are two or more players, coaches, or staff who test positive during a 10-day period, all team activities must pause for 10 days from the last date of exposure to the first confirmed COVID-19 case. All unvaccinated players, coaches, and staff are required to quarantine for 10 days from their last date of exposure to a COVID-19 case. Vaccinated players, coaches, and staff can still go to work and school.

In the event Nardin and/or regional schools are mandated to move to full virtual learning because of the number of COVID-19 cases, all youth sports associated with the school are required to stop for the duration of the virtual learning period.

Athletes are required to wear acceptable masks at all times when not playing or practicing. Athletes are strongly encouraged to wear masks during play and/or practice unless they are unable to tolerate masking for the physical activity. Coaches, trainers, and other individuals who are not directly engaged in physical activity are required to always wear masks.

## **8. COVID-19 Vaccination**

Nardin strongly recommends the COVID-19 vaccine for all eligible students, faculty, and staff. As per the County, vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. Promoting vaccination can help schools safely continue in-person learning as well as extracurricular activities and sports.

In accordance with ECDOH, fully vaccinated individuals will not be subject to the same quarantine requirements as those who are not fully vaccinated in most circumstances.

Nardin encourages all vaccinated students, faculty, and staff to inform the Academy of their full vaccination status. In compliance with the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accounting Act (HIPAA), Nardin has established a secure portal to upload proof of vaccination. A link to access this portal will be sent on Wednesday, September 1<sup>st</sup>, to all eligible students, families, faculty, and staff. To ensure individual privacy, please use this portal for all vaccine documentation.

## **9. COVID-19 Screening Testing**

The County recommends COVID-19 screening testing for students, faculty, and staff who are not fully vaccinated at least once per week during times of moderate, substantial, and high transmission as per CDC guidance.

As per the County, testing can provide an important prevention strategy and safety net to support in-person education where the transmission risk is moderate, substantial, or high.

In addition, PCR tests are used for screening testing which are the most accurate COVID-19 tests available.

Approximately one half of our school community is ineligible for the vaccine due to age requirements. Nardin will continue to examine responsible testing strategies reflective of the needs of our school community made up of students age 18 months to 18 years.

On September 2nd, New York State passed an [emergency regulation](#) requiring all teachers, administrators, and other school employees to submit a weekly COVID-19 testing unless they show proof of vaccination, with either a CDC vaccine card or the Excelsior Pass.

## **10. Cleaning and Disinfecting**

Nardin is committed to maintaining a clean and healthy environment. The Nardin Facilities Department is outfitted with four electrostatic sprayers for cleaning throughout the day. The sprayers use a non-toxic, EPA approved cleaning solution to safely eliminate viruses and bacteria.

In addition, a third-party, after-school nightly cleaning crew will follow additional campus-wide cleaning protocols each evening.

If a sick person or someone who tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 24 hours was in a certain area of the school, the area will be cleaned and disinfected.

## **11. Ventilation**

The air quality of Nardin meets all state and federal standards and filters will be changed regularly. Nardin has completed a complete review of its ventilation system, including the air exchange, heating, and cooling systems.

Students will be encouraged to get as much fresh air as possible. Windows will be kept open, classes may take place outside, and grades will enjoy supervised walks, as weather permits.

## **12. Visitors and Building Access**

Nardin will continue efforts to cultivate strong community and sense of belonging. However, during times of high infection, Nardin will implement limited access to the campuses. At this time, all visitors must be predesignated and prearranged with a faculty or staff member.

## **13. Disclaimer**

Nardin Academy will continue to monitor all local, state, and national guidelines related to COVID as well as infection rates within our school and the Western New York community. The Return to School Plan is subject to change and will be updated as needed to reflect any necessary modifications to the policies, protocols, and procedures outlined in this report.

## Per Erie County, Sources Consulted to Develop School Guidance:

1. Erie County Department of Health Guidance for PK-12 Schools, 2021-2022  
<https://www2.erie.gov/health/sites/www2.erie.gov.health/files/uploads/pdfs/2021-2022-ECDOH-school-guidance.pdf>
2. New York State Interim Guidance for In-Person Instruction at Pre-K to Grade 12 Schools During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency:  
[https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Pre-K to Grade 12 Schools MasterGuidance.pdf](https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Pre-K%20to%20Grade%2012%20Schools%20MasterGuidance.pdf)
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html#physical-distancing>
4. Erie County Department of Health School Guidance (2020-2021):  
<https://www2.erie.gov/health/sites/www2.erie.gov.health/files/uploads/pdfs/ECCOVID19schoolguidance.pdf>
5. Erie County Department of Health Youth Sports Guidance (2020-2021):  
<https://www2.erie.gov/health/sites/www2.erie.gov.health/files/uploads/pdfs/resuming-higher-risk-sports.pdf>
6. American Academy of Pediatrics COVID-19 Guidance for Safe Schools:  
<https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>
7. New York State Education Department Health Safety Guide for the 2021-2022 School Year <http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/back-school/nysed-health-and-safety-guide-for-the-2021-2022-school-year.pdf>

### Chronology

August 24, 2021: Return to School Plan produced based on Erie County guidance

September 2, 2021: Updated to reflect NYS mandates for school faculty and staff regarding vaccination and testing